services. Under the Act, it is optional to the litigant persons to approach the Permanent Lok Adalats for settlement of their dispute with the public utility service. The resolution of disputes through Permanent Lok Adalats not only minimizing the litigation expenditure, saves valuable time of the parties and their witnesses and also facilitates inexpensive permanent remedy appropriately to the satisfaction of both the parties. Therefore, it may not be proper to say that the institution of Permanent Lok Adalat is anti-litigant. The Supreme Court of India has also examined the validity of the amendment made in the Act in Writ Petition (Civil No. 543/2002) in the case of S.N. Pandey *Vs.* Union of India, and vide its order dated 28.10.2002 upheld the constitutional validity of the aforesaid Act. The Supreme Court of India has also held that the constitution of the Permanent Lok Adalats mechanism contemplate the judicial officer or a retired judicial officer being there alongwith other persons having adequate experience in the public utility services. We do not find any constitutional infirmity in the said legislation. The Act ensures that justice will be available to the litigant speedily and impartially. We do emphasis that the persons who are appointed on the Permanent Lok Adalats should be persons of integrity and adequate experience.

(e) As per Section 22D of the Legal Services Authorities (Amendment) Act, 2002, the Permanent Lok Adalat while conducting conciliation proceedings or deciding dispute on merit shall be guided by the principle of natural justice, objectivity, fair play, equity and other principles of justice, and shall not be bound by the code of Civil Procedure, 1908 and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.

(f) No, Sir.

Misuse of Section 498 of IPC by litigants

1901. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a judgement of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, wherein it has expressed its displeasure on the growing misuse of the provisions of Section 498 of the Indian Penal Code by the litigants;

(b) if so, whether any study on the implications of the judgement has been made;

(c) whether Government would consider a proposal to suitably amend the provision of IPC, as suggested by the Andhra Pradesh High Court; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reason therefor?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI K. JANA KRISHNAMURTHY): (a) to (d) The information is being collected from the Andhra Pradesh High Court and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Ratio of Judges

1902. SHRI P.G. NARAYANAN: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Law Commission had recommended that the ratio of Judges per million population should be increased to atleast 50 Judges per million in the following five years;

(b) if so, the ratio of Judges per million at present;

(c) whether the shortage of Judges is the cause of huge arrears of cases in courts; and

(d) the steps being taken to appoint more Judges so that arrears could be cleared?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI K. JANA KRISHNAMURTHY): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Eleventh Law Commission in its 120th Report on "Manpower Planning in Judiciary: A Blue Print" in July 1987, *inter alia,* observed that the strength of Judicial Officers in India was far less as compared to certain other countries. The Commission recommended that the present strength of 10.5 Judges per million population be increased to 50 Judges per million population in a phased manner.

At present, there are 14.7 judges per million population in the country.

(c) The pendency of cases in courts is, *inter-alia,* due to various factors including shortage of judges, enactment of new laws, increased